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SERMONS CCII.—IV.

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THE HUMILIATION OF CHRIST.

ACTS 2: 33.—Therefore, being at the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the gift of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.

ON the memorable day when this text was uttered, the church experienced a revival of religion. The multitude had listened to him, who spake as never man spake; yet they were unmoved. An eventful stillness had succeeded the eventful scenes of the crucifixion. The disciples were first scattered and perplexed, then assembled with one accord in one place, and engaged in prayer,—“that prayer which opens heaven.” So it proved. Eminent displays of God’s power soon appeared among the disciples. This was noised abroad, and soon brought together a great multitude, to whom Peter preached the Gospel.

Then it was the Gospel was attended with “the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” The multitude, who just now mocked, were pricked in the heart, and called on Peter and the other apostles to guide them. That was a great day for the church, a day when sinners were made to feel, when the stupidity, by which the heart is usually kept from the free and full access of the Gospel, had fled, and all was eye, all ear, all anxiety.

The Apostle, in his preaching, ascribes these wonderful displays of power in the physical, intellectual, and moral revolutions there effected, to Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Jews had crucified, but whom the apostles now declared to be the Son of God, the true Messiah, the maker of worlds, the only hope and Savior of men. These positions he proved to the Jews by the most unequivocal evidences, drawn from their own Scriptures, and finally from his resurrection, of which the apostles themselves, and a great many others, were witnesses.

“Therefore,” said he, “being at the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the gift of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth that, which ye now see and hear.”

Much of the plan of redemption is distinctly comprised in this single sentence. We are led to consider in this text the HUMILIATION of Christ, his EXALTATION, and the TRINITY EMPLOYED in the work of man’s salvation.

THE HUMILIATION OF CHRIST, distinctly set forth in the discourse of Peter, is more than implied in the text itself; for when it is said, he is exalted, we cannot comprehend the term except as we contrast it with humiliation, or a state inferior to that he now is declared to occupy.

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The humiliation of Christ, which we propose to consider in this discourse, may be embraced under three inquiries.

I. In what does it consist?

II. What was its object?

III. What is its influence?

I. What was the humiliation of Christ? Not the act of humility, which becomes a sinner; for he knew no sin, and therefore could never have that sense of guilt, which prompts to humility. But it was a descent from greatness, a stooping from dignity, which may consist with the greatest purity, as it is often the exhibition of the most disinterested benevolence.

From what, then, did the Savior stoop? Here we are brought directly to inquire what he is. Who and what is Christ? In answer to this question let the Scriptures speak; for the voice of inspiration alone is competent. Isaiah, in prophetic vision, calls him "the mighty God, the everlasting Father." The same prophet also said, "his name shall be called Immanuel," which is, being interpreted, God with us. John says, "the Word was God," and Christ was the Word. Paul says, "Christ is over all, God blessed for ever." And in another place, "he thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Again, "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." And again, "God was manifest in the flesh." "Adorn the doctrine of God our Savior." "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." In John's Gospel, it is said, "all things were made by Him." And in Hebrews, "he that made all things is God." In John's Epistle it is said, "hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us."

On this point it is not now my design to multiply all possible proof, but merely to assert the supreme claims of Christ to divine honors, in order to illustrate another point—the humiliation of Christ in executing his office of Mediator. It is this Being, thus exalted, and clothed with supreme majesty, "who was found in fashion as a man, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Yes, it is the same Being, who made the worlds; who said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" who fashioned man of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; who created the human soul. It is the same who, eighteen hundred years ago, in our assumed nature, suffered under Pontius Pilate the ignominious death of the cross, who "gave his back to the smiter, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and hid not his face from shame and spitting."

Here is humiliation indeed, decent from dignity, and submission to unmerited pains. Oh, that we might estimate it more fully, and be more suitably affected by the truth as it is in Jesus. But it is impossible for us to see what Christ has done, until we have a correct view of his character. We can never perceive his true humiliation, until we measure the distance he has stooped—till we go up to heaven and down to hell. Yet standing where we do, with the inspired Scriptures to help our survey, we may see wonders, which philosophy never taught, which the light of nature never revealed, what no unassisted eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived. On the cross, where Jesus of Nazareth was nailed, and poured out his life-blood, we behold the Maker of worlds, the Sovereign of the universe, the Former of our bodies, the Author of our spirits. Do you know of any deeper humiliation than this? Can you conceive of any greater disparity of circumstances?

Here is a place, to which we should tread softly and frequently. Here

we ought to linger and meditate, for the survey is full of instruction. Christian brethren, are you familiar with this ground? Have you been often here? Have you often, in your pious contemplations, trodden the heights of Calvary, and considered the wonderful display, which the scene of the crucifixion exhibited? God comes down to men, converses with them, does them good; and in return is despised, rejected, maltreated and crucified. Is this real? Then it is marvellous, and the mind is soon lost amid the varied scenes of wonder, love and praise displayed in it. It was done in a manner and recorded in a style peculiarly calculated to excite attention. Let the mind return from every other object to dwell upon it; for no beings are so deeply interested in the event as we are. This will appear more manifest in the consideration of the second question proposed.

II. What was the object of this humiliation? When God had made the world, and fitted it up for the accommodation of man, he created a holy race to inhabit it. They abused his mercies, lost their love for their Benefactor, and wandered away from him. So that, when the Lord looked down from heaven to see if there were any that did understand, it is testified—"they have all gone out of the way, there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

It is after this rebel race that Christ is reaching. He came from heaven to seek and save the lost. For this, he took our nature, endured and suffered long, and when he found the immutable law standing in the way of our salvation, he fulfilled it, and answered its commands on us by the vicarious sacrifice of himself. He can be deterred from his benevolent purpose, neither by the rejection of sinners against himself, nor by the contumely they poured upon him, nor by the penalties of the holy and irreversible law. He meekly endured all, and returns in triumph from the grave, to effect and show forth a new and more glorious creation than that, which first produced the material and intelligent universe.

The object embraced in the mission of Christ is expressed in a single declaration of the Apostle—"He came into the world to save sinners." To save sinners! This was his object, his enterprise on earth. How great, in this view, appears the condescension of God, when he thus stoops from his throne to save his enemies! What are we that the Lord should thus regard us, even more than we regard ourselves? We are brands snatched from the burning, worms rescued from corruption, and clothed with dignity and glory—and this has been done in disinterested benevolence; for, "though man were not, heaven would not want spectators, nor God want praise." God does not need us. Had sentence been passed on us without mercy, we should never have been missed from our present places, nor any places we may hereafter occupy. Heaven would still have been happy; God would have been glorified. Poor are we as sinners, and worthless. We say to corruption, thou art our mother, and soon find our habitation with the worm. Yet to effect our salvation, it was necessary the penalty of the law should be met; and to remove this difficulty in the way of pardon, the Savior consented to receive the expression of divine wrath upon himself. His humiliation was necessary to the work he undertook, and the object was accomplished in his sufferings and death.

My brethren, are you familiar with the object, for which the Son of God came into the world? It is an object, in which you are deeply interested. His eye was upon you. His benevolence reached after sinners

that were lost. He surveyed the wide spread desolation, the utter ruin which every where marked our world, and he came for its salvation. Objects of personal interest ordinarily secure attention. That which is here presented, transcendantly surpasses every other; and what hold does it take on your affections? Are your feelings here alive? Are you sensible and sensitive to the fact, that in the humiliation of Christ, the purchase of these privileges, the services of this house, the revelations of this Book, were contemplated and provided?

III. The influence of this humiliation, therefore, or the effect of it, is,

1. The removal of all insuperable objections to the sinner's salvation. The remark is sometimes made, that God, in the exercise of infinite power, could do as he pleases, and therefore could pardon sin without an atonement. But he cannot deny himself. He has made a law, and shall he not keep it? Where is his truth, his dignity, his immutability? He must execute that law. We can easily see that the maintenance of the divine government required that notice should be taken of sin. What shall be done? 'The sinner himself is unmoved. He is in rebellion. He cares not for the consequences. Shall he be left to those consequences? The benevolence of God forbids it. Shall he be saved? The justice of God forbids it. What remains then, but to devise a plan, in which both the benevolence and justice of God shall be exhibited and illustrated? This is done while the penalty is sustained by Christ, and the claims of the violated law are thereby averted from the guilty.

2. A second effect of this humiliation of Christ, is the exhibition of the divine attributes in a manner and to a degree they would never otherwise have been seen. Many of the attributes of God were indeed displayed in the work of creation, such as his wisdom in planning, power in executing, &c. But his truth and mercy and justice were but faintly seen. Those perfections, which most endear him to his creatures, have here an eminent illustration. Whatever contributes to display the divine perfections, serves one purpose of direct benevolence under the government of God. In the development of divine perfections consequent on the fall, the mind is furnished with additional sources of happiness, and new motives to love and obedience. This result could have no influence to make the fall of man in itself a desirable event, but may very justly be contemplated with interest, as an eminent effect of the humiliation of Christ. In the work of redemption is displayed a plan and exhibited attributes of character, which will be the subject of increasing admiration with men and angels through eternity; for as age accumulates upon age to heighten and enlarge the joys of the saints in glory, their love to God as the Author of these joys must also strengthen and increase.

3. The humiliation of Christ furnishes a subject peculiarly calculated to affect and soften the heart. Here is not only favor extended and grace dispensed, but personal suffering; individual, vicarious sacrifice comes between the guilty and his merited punishment. The mind is led to a scene of deep suffering, and compelled to dwell on what excites its sympathies and commiseration. I say then, the manner in which Christ has come down to us on the cross, is directly calculated to soften the heart, and to produce a lively and tender state of feeling and affection. All the severe features of a Sovereign are laid by, when God comes down to us in the Mediator. He comes to plead, to ask us to accept a favor, to return to him. The justice of God is indeed rolling on its floods, and presenting its terrors to the guilty soul. But they are resisted and stayed at the cross

of Christ, on whom they blacken and break with violence, while he still turns to the sinner, and with agonies, and tears, and smiles, calls on his heart to relent, on his penitence to flow, on his love to burn. The heart, that is not past feeling, must here be tried. There is no alternative. Its attention must be diverted, or it yields to the force of a divine influence. It cannot dwell at Golgotha, and look steadily at the cross of Christ, without breaking and bursting.

4. In the humiliation of Christ, God's hatred of sin is eminently displayed. How absolute and unchangeable, that it could not even spare the only Son ! If so, then think you that God will spare the sinner, who rolls sin as a sweet morsel under his tongue ? Think you that he will justify it in those who remain relentless, while pardon is offered on the only possible conditions ?

Where is the hateful nature of sin so eminently displayed as at the cross of Christ ? Where can its dreadful effects be more clearly seen ? It has gone, when forbid by infinite mercy to wreak its consequences on man, it has gone in pursuit of a victim even to heaven, and invaded the throne of God ; and rather than it should destroy for ever this fair portion of the moral universe, it has been permitted to spend its force and display its power on the Son of God !

5. In this event, God has shown his exceeding great love to man. When the thunder was about to break on his guilty head, Christ interposed and received the stroke. He survived, and brought up mercy from that grave, where he had paid the sinner's debt. Instead of the lightning's wrath, we now feel the Savior's love. Instead of the thunder's roar, it is the voice of mercy. How matchless, how unparalleled the mercy of God ! " Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend, but God hath commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

6. In the humiliation of Christ, we have an example for imitation. The greatest obstacle to the enjoyment of pardon and divine favor, is the pride of the sinner's heart. Little haughty ignorance in man is ever imperious in her demands, and unlimited in her claims. The pride of superiority is ever seeking, in the heart of the aspiring sinner, a place, which does not belong to him, and which he is ill calculated to fill. In the example of the Savior, this pride is rebuked. How great his condescension ! How humble his walk ! How far he came, and laid his glory by, to perform the work of man's redemption ! As he humbled himself to exalt us, while we were yet sinners and enemies, may we learn to be humble in the enjoyment of those distinctions, which were his purchase and gift. What a reproof to the pride of the human heart is the example of Christ ! May we, by contemplating him, learn to practise that spirit of forbearance, condescension, and love, which shall exclude " envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, and perverse disputings," from the church, and to practise that self-denial and self-sacrifice, which may make us efficient in every good work to do his will.

7. The effect of Christ's humiliation is to deepen our impression of the grace of God. Grace is the more dear to those who experience it, and rises in value in proportion to the expense at which it is extended, and the evil from which it saves. In the humiliation of the Saviour, embracing his sufferings and death, we see the price, at which this grace was purchased and extended. Nothing less than the blood of Christ could prepare the way for its dispensation. Victims might bleed on the altar of

sacrifice till the earth should be desolated, and Lebanon might burn, in vain. If the mind is led to no more costly sacrifice, no more high and holy offering, sin must remain for ever unpardoned, and guilt unmitigated. It is the Lamb of God, that must be bound upon the wood ; it is the sword of divine justice, that must slay the victim ; it is the fire of God's wrath that must kindle on the substitute. Blessed be God, this has not been withheld. When there was no eye that could pity, and no arm that could save, then God interfered ; and when Lebanon was not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof for a burnt offering ; when the earth was poor, and man was ruined, and angels were powerless ; then the throne of God furnished both the Priest and the sacrifice. And the penalty, from which we are thus spared, and the glory to which we are raised, must require an eternity to experience, and an eternity to tell. Here, then, at the cross of Christ, we see how the grace of God is magnified, and his love to sinners illustrated.

Come, then, my soul, here take thy privileged and chosen seat ; here employ all thy contemplations ; here rest that weary anxiety, which seeks in vain for peace and hope in sin. Come, sinners, from the various pursuits and perplexities of life, sit together at the feet of Jesus, and learn of him. Contemplate Christ crucified, Christ the mighty God, the equal Son, and crucified to save us from wrath. Reflect, that in this event every insuperable obstacle to the sinner's salvation is removed, the glorious attributes of God are eminently displayed for your admiration, a plan is presented peculiarly calculated to affect and soften the heart, God's hatred of sin is conspicuously seen, his love for man is demonstrated, an example of benevolence and self-denial is afforded us, and the grace of God is pre-eminently exalted. Come, brethren, bring your minds to the deep and delightful contemplation of these topics. Stay here, till the multiplied and bright objects of the scene open on the view in their true splendor. Stay, till you forget all other objects, till the world retires, heaven opens, till the soul is wrapt in that circle of thought and employment, which angels enjoy, but from which a deceitful world is ever calling it away.

" Stay, till you feel your heart
 " Ascending with your tongue ;
 " STAY, till the love of sin depart,
 " And grace inspire your song."

SERMON CCIII.

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST.

ACTS 2: 33.—*Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, &c.*

THE exaltation of Jesus in his mediatorial character was the necessary result of his humiliation. He had assumed our nature, been tempted in all points like as we are, felt our infirmities, suffered an ignominious death on the cross, and had risen from the tomb. After this, and while surrounded by a multitude of his disciples, he was parted from them, and received up into heaven.

To those who conversed with him after his resurrection, and who were now the eye-witnesses of his ascension, the evidence of his divinity was complete. But it is the design of the Savior that the testimony of competent witnesses to this fact shall be confirmed by standing evidences of his presence and power through every age of the church. In accordance with his promise, and in the execution of his purposes of grace, he sent the Spirit in the work of conversion soon after his ascension. And while the multitude were under the influence of this divine visitation, Peter boldly preaches Christ crucified, demonstrates to the Jews from their own scriptures that he was the Messiah, appeals for further confirmation to his miracles wrought in their presence, certifies to his resurrection and ascension, and adduces the obvious manifestations of divine influence at that time on the multitude as a standing testimony of his presence and power. "Therefore," he says, "being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the gift of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

The divinity of Jesus, proved in his humiliation, is demonstrated also in his exaltation. For we may consider him exalted,

I. In the place he now occupies.

II. In his moral perfections, illustrated in the plan of redemption.

III. In the execution of his mediatorial office, and in the praises of the redeemed.

I. Christ is exalted in the place he now occupies. For we cannot with some, who rob him of other distinctions, be satisfied to leave him, we know not where, while we honor him as we know not whom. We worship him as God's equal Son, who created all things, who upholds all things, who is the only Savior of men, and the judge of all. We therefore receive the testimony of divine inspiration, that after he had accomplished our redemption in the days of his flesh, "he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us." He has gone to prepare a place for us, "whence also he will come again, and receive us unto himself, that where he is, there we may be also."

He was united in glory with the Father before the world was. This glory was beheld in him while on earth full of grace and truth. He was received up into glory when he ascended, exalted above men, being appointed head of the church and heir of all things,—above angels, as it is written, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, made so much better than the angels as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."

I am supplied then, in the Scriptures, with an answer to every important question, that can be asked respecting my Savior. If asked *who* he is; I answer in the language of inspiration, he is "the mighty God."—"Immanuel, God with us,"—"God over all blessed for ever,"—"the true God and eternal life." Considered in the work of redemption, he is "the Son of God with power" to atone for sin, and has "laid down his life for us." If asked where he was before the world; I answer, "glorified with the Father," as asserted by himself in John 17: 5. If asked where he now is, I answer, "exalted at the right hand of God," where he will continue to be, preparing for the reception of the saints, until he shall come again to judge the world; for all judgment is committed into his hands. When this is accomplished, and the mediatorial office ended, the saints shall inhabit "the kingdom of Christ and of God," of which the Father and the Son are indiscriminately called the Sovereign, as united in equal honor, power, and

glory. In the Revelation, it is said, "the Lord Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of the city:" "the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." And in Colossians 2: 2: it is said, "the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ."

Thus is Christ exalted as the Sovereign of the Universe, the Creator, Preserver, and Judge of all; original, undervied, omnipotent, independent; who supports the pillars of the Universe, and can safely keep whatever is committed to his hands. He is exalted as a Savior, having accomplished the redemption of sinners.

We mourn not therefore as Mary, when she said, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." He was seen of his disciples for forty days after his resurrection. They were the witnesses of his ascension to heaven. In the spirit of prayer, they returned to Jerusalem, and worshipped and held communion with him. At the expiration of ten days, he manifested his efficient presence in the fulfilment of glorious prophecy, in the divine work of regeneration, in the effectual instruction and comfort of his people; and by these operations and influences he has ever since continued to establish and confirm his people. We receive these testimonies, we worship the Savior at the right hand of God, we realize his promises of divine influence.

II. Christ as Mediator is exalted in his own moral perfections, illustrated in the plan of redemption. These perfections are inherent, and depend not for their existence and true excellence on any thing that has been, or can be done. But in the plan of redemption, circumstances were furnished for their public and eminent display. They shone through the man Christ Jesus, and illuminated his character in the days of his flesh. They furnished an example in practice, and inspired a code in morals, such as philosophy has exhausted its power in vain to create. Exalted to his seat in heaven, he sheds his glory through all the place, and enkindles in all his worshippers a flame of love, admiration, and joy. And having received gifts for men, he diffuses through this dark world the light and grace, which roll a flood of dazzling glory through heaven and eternity. We see it faintly here. It multiplies and brightens on the devout and heaven-directed eye of prayer. It is displayed in burning effulgence, as we are transformed by degrees into his image; and when we put off this flesh, it shall enkindle in the soul that fervid glow of pure devotion, which will prove to the glorified saints, what are those joys, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, but which God hath prepared for them that love him."

That, which gave offence on earth, will constitute the glory of the Savior in heaven. The purity of his character, and the strictness of his moral law, and the justice and spirituality of his kingdom will there be his glory. It is the holiness of God, which secures the love and homage of all holy beings. Their song is, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts." This is the standard of pre-eminence with the inhabitants of heaven. The holiest being there will be the happiest, and accounted the most worthy. This it is, which will give peculiar energy and triumph to the devotions of heaven. The true purity of the divine character will be seen in the display of inherent attributes, and it will be appreciated and loved by all who are round about him. Therefore, the Savior will be exalted, in the glories of his own perfections, in a world where those perfections will be fully appreciated, by minds moulded and formed by his divine energy and benevolence to the same glorious and pure image.

III. We contemplate Christ as exalted in the execution of his mediatorial office, and in the praises of the redeemed. By virtue of his atonement he saves sinners; not by works of righteousness which they have done, but by his own grace. And sensible of their dependence on that grace, their song will always be—"not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory."

The company of the saved will be a great company, and their habitual employment will be acts of praise and homage to Him, who has redeemed them out of every nation, and washed them in his own blood. The Scriptures say this company will be innumerable. Every one, who shall stand and bow there, will be a trophy of victorious grace, saved by Christ. Not one will take any merit to himself, or ascribe any part of the work of his redemption to any but to Jesus of Nazareth. They will constitute, therefore, a standing and shining monument of his benevolence and power. Each was an heir of hell, and all that makes him to differ from those, "the smoke of whose torment ascendeth up for ever and ever," he owes to the grace of Christ. Here is laid a foundation for that praise, which shall fill all heaven. O brethren, if we are borne by him across this gulf, which stretches its deep shadows between us and the heavenly world, will not he possess an eminence up to which we shall delight to extend our view; and will not he excite our praise above and beyond all else which can engage or interest the soul? While the songs of angels shall delight the soul, and all the resplendent glories of the place charm the eye, shall we not find that *all* is beneath the Lamb, who is the light of the temple, and by whose sacrifice we have obtained a name and an inheritance there?

Although we are informed that there are few comparatively saved under the circumstances in which sinners have lived and do still live, yet all the company of saints, "a multitude which no man can number," shall be truly assembled. It is true the Gospel has found, and does now find, but poor acceptance in the world. Most men have rejected it, and my witnesses are here, that it is with difficulty commended to the approbation and embrace of sinners. Some here, still in their sins, have heard thousands of sermons, and ten thousands of prayers. Truly there are comparatively few saved. Still, Christ shall be glorified in the praises of the redeemed. You may reject the Gospel, but heaven shall be peopled by willing subjects of the King of kings. Christ shall be exalted without you, in the exercise of his power, in the display of his moral perfections, and in the multitude of his saints. Yes, though not one of you should accept his offered grace, his praise shall be glorious, his name infinitely exalted. Not to recur to that glory he shall gain while he vindicates the law in your condemnation and punishment, he shall be celebrated in the joyful songs of myriads of the saved.

The covenant of grace, or of redemption, secured to the Son a numerous seed to serve him, in whose conversion the Holy Spirit was to be the efficient, active agent. Under this covenant, a dispensation of grace commenced immediately after the fall, and many saints were gathered from earth before the public ministry and death of Christ. Under the new influence of Gospel light, and in connection with the ascent of Christ the Savior, and the descent of the Holy Ghost the Sanctifier, a season of religious revival was enjoyed on the day of pentecost, which will be ever memorable in the history of the church. Similar triumphs have been witnessed in succeeding ages, and they are destined to continue until the world shall be converted, and the church on earth shall embrace the world's population, and triumph over her enemies. Christ is on the throne. The

agency is there. It is almighty. We have the promise recorded; and it has been for eighteen centuries in a constant course of execution.

Under this gracious administration, revivals of religion have been often enjoyed by the church. I allude now to facts, which are familiar to you. Here, Christ has been exalted and honored in the salvation of sinners. A divine work has been here repeatedly wrought, of which ye are witnesses, and which impresses the subject with peculiar and deep interest. Oh, from this spot, from the feeble services of this house, how many shall be permitted to rise, and join that multitude whose everlasting song shall be,—“Worthy the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God, by his blood!” And while the Gospel here continues to speak, how many more, we may hope, will, through the same divine influence, be prepared for the same employments, and admitted to the same company!

Glorious thought! that Christ is still exalted, and we are under discipline for heaven. Yes, he is still at the right hand of God, exalted to be a Prince and a Savior. Still it may be repeated, he has “received of the Father the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Thanks be to God, we may still add, He has shed forth that which ye have seen and heard. God grant also, that we may be able soon to forget the *past*, in the happy, rapturous experience of the *present*, and say,—“Which ye *now* see and hear.”

From the wide field of instruction furnished by this subject, two or three reflections deserve particular consideration.

1. How humble ought Christians to be, under a sense of their dependence, and with the example of Christ, their great Master, before them! He was independent, yet he condescended, became poor for our sakes, and submitted to an ignominious death. We are entirely dependent; let us cherish a spirit of humility. This grace is eminently characteristic of the Christian. Without it, he can never find a place at the foot of the cross, can never realize the blessedness of communion with saints, can never enjoy the satisfactions of a soul at peace. The moment he rises in his feelings above his place, he loses that calm serenity which ever prevails in the vale of humility, and encounters storms, peril, and ruin. The Scriptures, therefore, often instruct us to “be clothed with humility.” A proper sense of guilt will ever keep us humble and safe. Whenever we become restive, and attempt to rise, we encounter dangers. An humble posture is always the safest, and the only proper one for a poor sinner. “A man’s pride shall bring him low, but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit.” Let Christians, therefore, dwell much on the example of Christ in his humiliation. Behold the loveliness of his character as here expressed, and transcribe it into your own.

2. We see the safety and dignity of those, who trust in Christ. He is exalted. “He is able to save to the uttermost *all* that come unto God through him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” We then “have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us in the Gospel.” The exaltation of Christ ensures the safety of every believer. His disciples saw him after his resurrection, and they saw him ascend to heaven. They experienced the promise of the Father as he had told them, and witnessed the evidence of his exaltation in the conversion of sinners. These things are testified and recorded for our consolation.

Our happiness depends much on the stability of those objects, on which we rest. This is a principal reason why the things of time give so flattering and so false a hope. It is deeply impressed on the mind that they are fleeting. So, even while resting on them, the mind is unsettled and anx-

ious. But the experienced Christian is persuaded that he can never be separated from the love of Christ. "Whether he lives, he lives to him, or whether he dies, he dies to him. Whether he lives, therefore, or dies, he is the Lord's." And he sometimes feels like Paul, that "it is far better to die, and be with Christ," than to live. To support them amid the inevitable trials of life, the experience of the same Apostle is often realized to Christians, diligent in duty; and they become "persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

And where can the soul find a more substantial, and happier source of consolation, than in the contemplation of a latter end of peace, and an eternal union with all that is good, and omnipotent, and pure? Amid the disappointments of life, here is rest. When friends fail us, here is one that "sticketh closer than a brother." When bereavements strike our earthly comforts dead, here are undying sources of consolation. Here is an adequate support in the desolation of wasting sickness, and a refuge in the leanness of death. Christian brethren, it is your privilege to appropriate this consolation. In prosperity, let it keep you humble; in the world, let it keep you thoughtful of coming changes; in bereavements you may feel its power to bless; in sickness, lean upon it; and in the darkness and poverty of death, let it be your refuge and very present help. Christ will be exalted in the redemption of his people, and he will proceed from conquering to conquer. Philosophy, and reason, and power have been united and employed against the advancement of this work on earth. Ridicule and mockery have lent their aid. Still it goes on. Revivals of religion are multiplied, the heathen are receiving the truth as it is in Jesus, the Jews are returning, and this growing kingdom is advancing under the guidance and protection of the great King; and let all the saints shout for joy.

3. There is one other consideration, which I would not fail to suggest. It is the manner in which all that has now been said must affect the finally impenitent. Christ indeed has submitted to death, even the death of the cross,—but you have scornfully rejected that cross. He is risen again, and is exalted at the right hand of God, but you have not believed. He is sustained and honored in the perfections of his moral character, and the praises of the redeemed, but you are insensible to them both.

From the position, impenitent men, which you occupy, it must follow, that all the power with which the Savior of sinners is clothed, all the perfections in which he is exalted, all the distinctions to which he is raised, will be employed against you. The very sources of blessing to the righteous will prove means of increasing the torment of those who despise them. The effect of this eminent display of divine love will be to increase the guilt and heighten the miseries of those, who shall turn away from it. Such proposals of pardon cannot be trifled with by the sinner without producing most fearful results, without greatly aggravating his guilt. Indeed we are taught that so great is the guilt of rejecting the Savior distinctly offered, that all other offences are involved in this one. When, as impenitent sinners, you stand in judgment, your condemnation will not proceed on the evidence that you have stolen, or lied, or profaned God's holy name, or holy day. These, if they exist, are minor offences. They are all merged in one great, damning sin,—the rejection of an offered Savior. "*This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light.*"

It becomes my duty, then, again to offer for your acceptance this Savior from sin, once humbled, now exalted and glorified. To you are the words of this salvation sent. This Savior, now exalted, condescends to plead with you. Though in his humiliation, he was poor, in his exaltation he is rich—rich in princeless blessings secured for sinners by his poverty. In his humiliation he was despised, was put to grief, and was forsaken; in his exaltation he is honored in the praises of purchased souls, and in the possession of his original dignity: in his humiliation he suffered, and submitted himself; in his exaltation he is jealous of his honor, and will proceed to vindicate his authority: in his humiliation he condescended and pleaded with sinners, and still, in the execution of mediatorial office, he pleads with them by his word, and providence, and appointed ministry; but the time will soon come when he will plead no more—when judgment will proceed on the evidence of the past. This is a day of forbearance, of love, of life. “As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” Our God is a God of mercy, but not of mercy only. Opening this everlasting Book, I read—“He whets his glittering sword, and his hand takes hold on vengeance.” I see—“dark clouds are his pavilion round about.” I hear—it is the voice of mercy still, but of mercy long abused; and the very next accent may be the thunder of that voice, which calls you to Judgment. Oh, “kiss the Son, lest he be angry with you, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little.”

SERMON CCIV.

THE TRINITY EMPLOYED IN MAN’S REDEMPTION.

ACTS 2: 33.—*Therefore, being at the right hand of God exalted, &c.*

MUCH of the plan of redemption, in its executive process, is set forth in this single text, leading us directly to consider,

- I. The salvation of the sinner as the work of the Trinity.
- II. The part, which each person in the sacred Trinity performs in this work.
- III. The necessity of this Trinity to the work of man’s redemption.
- IV. The beauty and harmony of the doctrine.

I. In our text the salvation of the sinner is set forth as the work of the Trinity. We plainly see that the doctrine of a Trinity in the Godhead is taught in the holy Scriptures; it is palpable. Here are the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost; three persons employed in the work of man’s salvation. The Father gives to the Son, and does not receive the gift. The Son receives the gift from the Father, and does not make the gift to the Father. The Son sends the Holy Ghost, and is not sent by him. The Holy Ghost is sent, or as our confession of Faith has it, “proceeds from the Father and the Son,” and does not send the Father nor the Son. Can any distinction of persons be more plainly expressed?

Again,—when the law was to be repeated to Israel, the Lord said,—“Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is ONE Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy

might." *One Lord*, essentially one, in substance, and in distinction from the gods of the heathen, which were many; *one*, as an object of simple and undivided worship; *one*, as the object of allegiance; *one*, as a unit necessary to be understood when the law was about to be solemnly announced, and repeated, and enforced on their observance. And so God is properly, essentially, and absolutely *ONE* only living and true God, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, having an existence in a Trinity of persons, mysterious, like all his attributes, co-equal, co-eternal, and essentially the same in all divine perfections.

When man was originally formed of the dust of the earth, it was the result of divine counsel in the Trinity—"And God said, let Us make man." When man had violated the divine law, and was found wholly destitute of that *love to God*, which that law required, his redemption was the result of divine counsel in the Trinity. The Father asserts the claims of the law, the Son accepts the penalty, and the Holy Ghost, by a divine efficiency exerted on the hearts of sinners, "prepares many sons unto glory." Here, each performs a separate office. The law must be asserted—it cannot yield. The eternal Father asserts it. The Son takes the sinner's place under the law, and the substitution is accepted: he is "God our Savior." The Holy Ghost prepares the sinner's heart for the reception and love of the truth, and enlightens and sanctifies; he is God our Sanctifier. Thus we see, then, as set forth in the text, the sinner's salvation is the work of God in the Trinity. "Therefore," said the Apostle, "being at the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the *Father* the gift of the *Holy Ghost*, he (*Jesus*) hath shed forth that, which ye now see and hear."

II. We are to consider more explicitly the part, which each person in the sacred Trinity performs in the work of man's redemption. The law had been made and prescribed to man by the *ONE* only living and true God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This law, having been wilfully and wickedly violated, God, as the maker and executor of the law, must exact the penalty of temporal and eternal death. If mercy is extended, justice must not be disparaged, nor truth violated, nor the depraved and rebellious heart remain in its enmity and pollution.

Here, then, is a three-fold service required. The law must be asserted in its claims, and guarded from dishonor. The sinner needs a substitute and advocate. A work of regeneration must be performed to prepare the heart for a holy kingdom. The Father undertakes for the law, Christ the eternal Son undertakes for the sinner, and the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, executes the dispensation of grace. Here, then, the Father represents the law, preserving the faithful administration of justice. The Son represents the sinner, meeting in himself the penalty of the law, and thereby providing for the dispensation of mercy. The Spirit executes a divine work on the heart of the sinner, which illustrates to his experience the divine attributes of justice and mercy, and prepares him to receive pardon under a full conviction of utter unworthiness and ruin.

Nor are here conflicting interests. The whole disposition of the God-head is in favor of the administration of justice, of mercy, and of truth. The Father loves mercy as well as justice, and can never urge the latter to the prejudice of the former. Christ loves justice as well as mercy. The Holy Spirit aids the dispensation of neither at the expense or exclusive of the other. Yet the Father performs a work in this plan separate

from the Son, and which the Son does not perform. The Son performs a work, which the Father does not perform. The Holy Spirit performs a work separate and different from both. And yet whatever is performed by the Father, or the Son, or the Spirit, is properly and strictly the work of God, harmoniously approved and sanctioned in the divine mind. Is justice asserted? It is God. Is mercy dispensed? It is God. Is a sinner saved? It is God, who does it. Do the Scriptures speak of justice or the administration of law? It is God the Father, or God without distinction of person. Do they speak of mercy, or atonement for sin, by which, in the administration of the divine government, mercy may be dispensed to the guilty? It is Christ the Son of God, who has undertaken for the sinner, and become sin for him, and provided for him a justifying righteousness. Do they speak of regeneration, by which the enmity of the sinner's heart is removed, and love enkindled, and the law commended to his approbation and acceptance as holy, and just, and good? It is God the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to reprove of sin, showing to the sinner the enmity of his own heart, illuminating his mind, and quickening all his powers to see the truth in its application to himself, illustrating the divine character, and bringing him into present judgment. Is the proud, rebellious heart subdued? Does the sinner repent, abhor himself, believe in Christ as a Savior? It is the work of the Holy Spirit. Does he strive against sin, gain the victory over the flesh, walk in newness of life? It is the work of the Holy Spirit. Is he comforted and edified in the truth? Does he grow in grace? Does he hunger and thirst after righteousness? Is he a new man in his desires and enjoyments, in his hopes and aspirations, in the circle of his duties and employments? It is the work of the Holy Spirit. Is he sustained under trials? Does the fire of devotion glow in his soul, as the lamp of life expires? Is he strengthened in the inner man as the outward man decays? Does he triumph in death? It is the work of the Holy Spirit. Is the saint raised from the dead, incorruptible and pure, unsullied and immortal? It is the work of the same agency. For, "if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

III. We are now to consider the necessity of this Trinity to the work of man's redemption. We should speak with great caution and respect, when we undertake to say what God cannot do, or what it is necessary for him to do. Yet this is a language that may with propriety be sometimes used, and expresses ideas which exist in truth. God cannot deny himself. He cannot do wrong. He can in no wise clear the guilty. He cannot look on sin with allowance. It is necessary that the law of God should be executed. If the sinner is saved, it is necessary that the law of God should be satisfied by vicarious suffering. In order to the enjoyment of God, and a state of happiness in heaven, it is necessary that a work of regeneration should be performed in the sinner's heart.

Here, we see the necessity of the Trinity in the work of redemption. The only question now to be settled in the establishment of this position, is—could not this work all be done without a Trinity in the Godhead? We reason from what we know, or are able to infer from premises possessed, and we answer, No. We do not see how this work could be performed without this divine Trinity. If the claims of the law are to be asserted, who will assert them but God? God must execute his own law. It can be safely intrusted to no other hands. Like its Author, the divine

law is immutable. All else is liable to change, and therefore can furnish no parallel. If an atonement, or satisfaction to that law, is to be made, God only can make it. Who else can do it? Where is the power? Who can measure eternity in any one particular, so as to consent intelligently to assume an obligation or penalty involving eternity? Who but God? But suppose this difficulty were removed, and an angel or any other being were willing to offer himself a substitute for the sinner to endure the literal penalty of the law, where would be the dispensation of mercy? The illustration of this divine attribute would still be a desideratum in the moral universe. The identical sinner would escape, but not through grace. Mercy could not enter into the scheme of such a substitution. As it is, this perfection of the divine character is eminently displayed. If, as a lawgiver, I make a law, and prescribe that the first man who is guilty of the crime of forgery shall have his right hand cut off, and I should clear the guilty by the substitution of my own hand for his, whatever objection might be urged against the measure, it certainly would be an eminent dispensation of mercy. God, then, dispenses mercy to the sinner when he assumes himself the penalty, and makes a satisfaction to the law, which preserves its honor, establishes his truth, and saves the offender from merited punishment. None but God can do this.

Again—if the sinner is to be saved in heaven, it is necessary he should be holy. A work of regeneration must be performed in his heart, by which its enmity must be slain, its choice directed, its dispositions changed and rectified, and the whole current of its affections controled. Who is able to look into the secret thoughts of the soul, to know its disposition, to understand its constitution and principle of action, so as even to anticipate its course of conduct, much more its emotions and necessary action under every possible circumstance, and every variety of motive? Who can do this but He, who made the soul, who intimately understands its nature, who can himself control it, and turn it as the rivers of water are turned? He only can enter into its secret chambers, analyze it, reveal its secret and hidden lineaments to its own view, control, new-create, and sanctify it. None but God can do this.

Here then, in the nature of the work to be performed in man's redemption, we see the necessity of a Trinity in the Godhead. Justice and mercy are to be united under the government of God in a consistent theory, and practically applied, in a harmony of the divine attributes, to the salvation of sinners. Surely to the accomplishment of this plan, the Trinity is necessary. All other theories are inadequate, imperfect, and unsafe. They take some part of the work from the hands of God, and commit it to a creature, subject to the direction of fatal imbecility, ignorance, or doubt.

IV. We have still to contemplate the beauty and harmony of the doctrine.

Its harmony is exhibited where mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other." Here are clashing interests, but no discord. When mercy cannot proceed against justice, God the Son satisfies that justice, and bids mercy proceed. When mercy cannot proceed against the hardness and corruption of the heart, for which the dispensation is prepared, God the Holy Ghost enlightens, convicts, softens, melts, and changes that heart, and brings it, by a voluntary action of its own powers, now enlightened, refined, and regulated, to embrace, and love, and serve God. When eternal ruin hung over the fate of man under the administration of the violated law, this plan of redemption was ma-

tured in the council of the divine Trinity. The Father consented to deliver up the only begotten Son to the operation of the law, a substitute for sinners; the Son consented to yield his life a ransom; and the Holy Spirit became the efficient agent in illustrating this plan to the minds of sinners, dark, ignorant, and lost; and in gaining the voluntary consent of these perverse minds to the truth. Here is harmony produced where every thing appeared discordant and hopeless. And this harmony is the result of the simple and natural action of God in the Trinity.

The beauty of the doctrine appears principally in its adaptation, and actual efficiency to produce its end, and that end one of the highest glory and benevolence. It saves sinners—saves them from the curse of the law—saves them under sentence of an immutable law, inflicting an eternal penalty—saves them in consistency with divine justice, in harmony with that law, and with the integrity of the divine character. Here is moral beauty which Almighty power alone could create, which uncreated, could have found an ideal archetype only in the conceptions of the infinite mind, and which could have found an application to the case of sinners only in the harmonious action of the divine Trinity.

And now, have we not here, in the harmony, beauty, and glory of this one doctrine, a sufficient subject for wonder, love, and praise, through all eternity? Who would mar the beauty, or interrupt the harmony of this doctrine? Let him first furnish, as a substitute, another doctrine, equally glorious, consistent, harmonious with itself and in all its relations, and withal equally supported by the unperturbed, plain testimonies of the Bible. Before he proceeds to remove this corner-stone, on which I rest my eternal hope, let him show me one equally beautiful, more rational as a ground of trust, and better supported by the word of God. This he can never do. Oh, no; that scheme which removes the mystery of the Trinity from the plan of salvation, disrobes that plan of its principal moral beauty, mars the brightest attribute of God, conflicts the principles and destroys the harmony of the divine government, for one mystery substitutes greater mysteries, and utterly obscures the sun, which enlightens my path to the mercy seat. The doctrine of the Trinity is the central sun of the Christian system, the source of light and heat, motion and life, to the worlds of mind within its sphere, which it holds in their orbits and controls. Blot it out, and you throw us back on the night of paganism, to the mere religion of nature, the dim twilight of heathen philosophy. We will say then, with the chief Apostle—"Without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

Thus you see the divine Trinity employed in the work of man's redemption. You see the part, which each person in the sacred Trinity performs in this work. You see the necessity of this Trinity to the work of man's redemption, and the beauty and harmony of the doctrine. Instead then of a Being partial, bloody, or unjust on the one hand, or changeable, imbecile, or compromising on the other, you see all the glorious attributes of a Being infinitely perfect meet, and harmonize, and unite in a work of infinite benevolence. You are called away from theory and speculation, from philosophy and human science, to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of him lessons of infinite wisdom. You are called to leave all masters on earth, and to pay your homage to that divine Master and Savior, whom "all the angels of God worship."